
FINDING MY DIRECTION

In particular, Arts and Humanities students often have a difficult time identifying potential career paths. Often their choices are influenced by the idea that a liberal arts background is not particularly transferrable and the most obvious next step is teacher's college, law school or grad school. Although those are three great options, they are, by no means, your only options. If you are not passionate and determined to become a teacher or a lawyer, or are not driven by a burning research question that can only be answered by a higher level degree, then these are likely not the best options for you.

WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN MAKING CAREER DECISIONS?

There are many factors that may influence your career goals and decisions. For some, the expectations of their parents weigh heavily when it comes to determining course/degree selection and future career direction. For others, the greatest stumbling block is having no idea of what someone with a degree in Political Science, or History, or English or . . . can do for a career.

It is important to look not only at the question, "Where are the jobs?" but also, "Which careers are best-suited to my interests, values, aptitudes, experiences, etc.?" For this reason, we have included questionnaires that match your interests and personality to specific careers as well as providing job market information.

STEP 1: EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS

We suggest starting with the first site on this list – www.careercruising.com. This is an interactive, Canadian career guidance resource that provides in-depth profiles on hundreds of different careers including interviews with real people and a career interest inventory called **MatchMaker**. **CareerCruising** requires the following login information:

Username: **success**

Password: **mustang**

Click on the Career Matchmaker icon and complete the interest inventory to find out what careers are best suited to your interests. Do the "long form" – all 93 questions – for the most personalized results. Typically the best matches are at the top of the list. Click on any of these suggestions to find out more about these careers. Also check out the interviews with people actually doing these jobs to hear their practical advice. You can also click on Explore Careers to search for specific careers by alphabetical index, school subject (i.e. english), or general field (i.e. politics).

STEP 2: LOOK AT HOW YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE RELATES TO CAREERS

Another important part of the career decision-making process is looking at your personality and how it relates to finding a meaningful career. If you want to be happy in a career, then it is important to find something that draws on your natural tendencies and preferences. If you are extroverted, then you are not likely to enjoy a career that involves a lot of solitary reflection. Try the Type Focus assessment at:

Type Focus: <http://www.free.typefocus.com>

STEP 3: EXPLORE HOW YOUR APTITUDES AFFECT YOUR CAREER DECISIONS

Next, take a look at your aptitudes – your natural talents and things you are good at. We sometimes assume that something that comes easily to us comes easily for everyone, but this is usually not the case. Ask friends, family, and others who know you to suggest some areas they see you succeeding at or having natural abilities in.

Also, ask yourself questions such as:

- What school subjects come easily for me?
- Am I technically minded? Creative?
- Do I have organizational skills? Computer skills?
- Am I good with people? Working on a team?

Look back at the list of careers you are compiling. Which ones fit with your aptitudes?

STEP 4: EXPLORE HOW YOUR VALUES IMPACT A DECISION ABOUT CAREERS

The final part of the self-exploration process is looking at your values. The last place you want to be is in a career that does not line up with your personal beliefs and priorities.

Some questions you may want to consider:

- Do you value security and consistency or variety and risk-taking in your work environment?
- Is social interaction and being part of a group or independence and autonomy important to you?
- Do you value achievement and recognition or being “behind the scenes”?

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- Is your work environment, pace, and/or location important to you?
 - Do you value financial independence? Status? Creative expression? Contribution to society?

Again, refer to your list of careers. Which ones fit or conflict with your values?

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR CAREER SELF-EXPLORATION:

- **What Color is your Parachute?** Richard Nelson Boles (2011)
- **Zen and the Art of Making a Living** Laurence G. Boldt (1999)
- **Career Match: Connecting Who You Are with What You'll Love to Do** Shoya Zichy (2007)
- **Do What You Are** Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron (2007)

**STEP 5: RESEARCH OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOKS,
“HOW PROMISING IS THIS CAREER?”**

Now that you've done some self-exploration, the next step is to research careers that you feel are a “good-fit”. You may want to research specific work locations as a particular career may have a positive outlook in one part of the country or province and a negative outlook in another.

- Job Profiles – <http://www.jobprofiles.org/index.htm>
- What's Key: Career Resource Directory – <http://www.whatskey.org>
- Job Futures: Federal Occupational Outlooks – <http://www.jobfutures.ca>
- Career Paths – <http://www.careerpathsonline.com>
- Human Resource and Skill Development Canada – <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/home/shtml>
- The London Economic Development Corporation - <http://www.ledc.com>
- Job Boom – <http://www.jobboom.com/conseils/top-100.html>
- Ignition: Guide to Canada's Industry Sectors – <http://www.councils.org/ignition>

In addition to these web-based resources, it is important to take time to interview people who are in the field that you are interested in, volunteer or job shadow. This will not only give you insight into the career, but will also begin to build your network of contacts for when your job search begins. Look also at how your past work and life experiences and the influence of significant others may impact your career choices.